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TRAINING THE NECESSARY CADRES FOR THE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF POWER INSTALLATIONS

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TRAINING THE NECESSARY CADRES FOR THE OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE OF POWER INSTALLATIONS.

BY

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1. The dominant factor in the Uganda Electricity Board's policy in training has been cost. Initially, the Board's services were operated almost entirely by expatriates. These were the days, starting in 1948, of organising the finance, building the Owen Falls Dam and the transmission lines, the days of capitalisation of interest, the days of faith. A specific training scheme for artisans had been inaugurated in 1955 and a more ambitious programme had been started in the Accountancy Department. By 1958 most of the mechanised accountancy work was being done by Africans and in that year the Board decided to appoint a whole-time Training Officer with a wide brief. Politically the Board had to get local roots and financially so to develop as to be able to meet its onerous liabilities in regard to £30 millions of capital expenditure. The organisation had to be planned so as to employ the cheaper local people for whom overheads were lower, whom it did not have to send overseas on leave, to whom it did not provide free housing, ad infinitum. An immediate policy decision was that no new stenographers would be recruited overseas and this, in 1958, was revolutionary.

2. The administrative and particularly the accountancy sides were able to get off to a quicker start than the engineering. In the former branches the Board started recruiting basically educated people and on these trained minds grafted experience on the job. There was no insistence on professional qualifications, the approach being to accept whatever discipline the mind had been trained in and with guidance by the experienced expatriate who was to be encouraged to work himself out of a job, giving increasing challenges until the local person was competent and confident to take over. The expatriates recruited on permanent and pensionable terms, had to be offered attractive alternative terms of service so that they could pick up a lumpsum as soon as they had trained their replacement. The sooner they trained a replacement, the sooner they could get back to England to find alternative employment.

3. The Board planned its staffing requirements to discover when each expatriate should leave the Board's service and gave new contracts accordingly. The following table with actual figures up to 1962 shows, for 1963-1966, the targets the Board has set itself to achieve.

ESTIMATE OF SENIOR STAFF TO 31ST DECEMBER, 1966

At 31st Dec.	Total	Expatriates	African	Asian
1958	160	158	1	1
1959	150	147	1	2
1960	127	122	2	3
1961	116	108	4	4
1962	122	96	13	13
1963	137	77	40	20
1964	143	61	60	22
1965	145	40	70	35
1966	148	27	80	41

4. By the nature of things, expatriate artisans have been regarded as senior staff in contrast to normal practice elsewhere. When these skills are transferred to local people, the Board hopes to regrade them in the establishment in their normal positions.

5. Again by the nature of things, the set pattern of job choice for Africans does not, as yet, include engineering but fortunately Uganda has a large Asian community which is more technically minded. This may well result in an over-production of Asian engineers. Today the Board has 33 engineers but is hoping to reduce this number and train up many more technicians with fewer engineers. Yet there are, to the Board's knowledge, up to 47 Uganda Asians training to become Electrical Engineers in the United Kingdom alone. There are only 7 Africans in training while the Board, of its 33 engineers, has only 2 African Electrical Engineers.

6. By the award of vacation scholarships, the Board is trying to break down the African non-technical background by inviting school children in their pre-final year at school to spend ten days on job locations in the power house, training yards and elsewhere in an attempt at informing them of the opportunities open to them. On top of that, all Uganda students studying for engineering courses at the Royal College, Nairobi, are given six months' employment between their acceptance and taking up of courses at the College, again in an attempt to inform them of what is involved in engineering in all directions. The Board attaches the greatest importance to these opportunities as the African has to be effectively involved in engineering, if only to anticipate extreme pressure, likely to appear if it is only Asians, though Uganda born, who are running such industries as the Board's.

7. The Board's Hollerith Section must be unique in Africa in that it is entirely supervised and manned by local people. This section serves 33,000 consumer accounts per month, wages for 1,600 employees, analyses 7,000 stores classifications, tabulates and collates invoices for all payments and prepares analyses for the costing department in addition to many other duties. All operators have been trained locally and selected supervisors are intersent on 3-4 months' courses in the United Kingdom.

8. For its commercial staff, again the Board decided not to recruit overseas at all but to advertise for well-educated local people and to train these up. The London Electricity Board seconded an experienced Commercial Officer for a 2-3 year period to train the recruits who were graded as potential Commercial Officers (4), Commercial Assistants (13) and Demonstrators (8). All the Commercial Officer Cadets were, as part of their training, sent on 9 months' courses, arranged by the Electricity Council, in the United Kingdom. Selected Commercial Assistants were also sent on these courses in the United Kingdom.

9. In 1961 the Board approached the Ford Foundation for assistance in studying its training methods in the hope that it could place its findings at the disposal of other employers. In defining the training problem, representatives of the Board and the Foundation decided on a three pronged attack. In the first instance, the need of job analysis to define the skills to be transferred was given priority and this has been performed by a London firm of business consultants. This firm has made interim reports to the Board and some of their findings such as splitting the post of a highly qualified and experienced expatriate into two less diffuse but more specialised posts for local persons confirm a policy on which we ourselves had already embarked. Another issue isolated was the human problem - a greater problem in Africa today with the political changes than would be the case elsewhere. An American psychologist has been recruited, with assistance from the Foundation, to assist the Board's Personnel Officers in studying this live problem. Thirdly the Board is shortly getting a Scandinavian engineer with an educational background to assist it in transferring the skills isolated through the job-analysis phase from expatriates to local people. The Board hopes to by-pass the traditional patterns of training and in a crash training programme concentrate on transferring the essential skills.

10. Up to recently the Board had aimed at encouraging Africans to take up engineering but with pressure it has recently changed direction and decided instead to concentrate on the training of technicians. In spite of a two year attempt to recruit a qualified Instructor, the Board failed and, preparing for City and Guilds Course 57 which insists on such an Instructor, has recently placed 20 students in the local Kampala Technical Institute for the Ordinary National Diploma with promise that the best of these will be sent on further studies abroad at the end of this training. The Board was anxious for an industry-based course though and, through the Electricity Council in London, is placing another 8 with Electricity Boards in England for a two year training period with day release and sandwich courses at Technical Schools in the hope that they can get back to Uganda and be put in job locations with qualified technicians for another two years till they are capable and confident of running districts. All this might mean a re-organisation of the Board into smaller units to take the place of the large Areas of today.

11. For linesmen and other artisans, the Board has run five year apprenticeship schemes with 6 months' residential courses at its Training Centre. We have had fair results (Appendix refers) but too often it is sad to see an able experienced man's chances diminished because of lack of English, a language necessary for the safety rules. The Board tries to give such cases English lessons at the Training Centre to assist them get through their Grade I tests.

12. For Clerks, there are Internal Correspondence Courses, success in which mean automatic financial rewards.

13. Theoretically a man can join as an unskilled labourer and with diligence, rise to be Chief Engineer, Chief Accountant or Secretary. The avenues of promotion charts have deliberately been drawn, and circulated, with this in mind. In practice, lack of English or basic education still militate against this but with improved educational opportunities, the Board hopes this will one day be possible.

APPENDIX

U.E.B. PROGRESS BY SEPTEMBER, 1962

	Dec. 1959	Dec. 1960	Dec. 1961	Sept. 1962
Artisans Qualified in Trade Tests Grades II and III	42	157	195	214
In Grade I	4	13	25	30
	46	170	220	244

	1959	1960	1961	JAN-SEPT 1962
Trainees on various internal local courses (excluding Vacation Trainees and Correspondence Course candidates) during the year	63	89	132	141
Number of above transferred to permanent staff	-	17	34	30

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